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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSUL 000028

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SUBJECT: NINEWA: SINJAR YEZIDIS UNHAPPY WITH RULING KURDS

REF: A) 2005 MOSUL 201; B) BAGHDAD 736

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CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial
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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Spokesmen for the Yezidi Movement for Progress and Reform (YMPR) demand that influence by the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Sinjar must end or "civil war" would begin. Waad Matto of YMPR claims the KDP has too much control over the police and local government, and that "Shias and Kurds" play too large a role with providing security. Matto says the Yezidi community appreciates U.S. assistance and cooperation, but claims the USG should do more to protect minorities. He is hoping the USG could help pressure the GOI to "re-create" a "Yezidi Ministry" in the central government to ensure the community has a voice in Iraq. End Summary.

2. (SBU) PRT Poloff met with Waad Hamad Matto, deputy for the general secretary of the Yezidi Movement for Progress and Reform (YMPR), and Mirza Ismael, YMPR member and chairman for the London Yezidis Community Center of Ontario, Canada, in Mosul on March 8.

COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE WITH THE USG

3. (C) Stressing the community's appreciation for the U.S. presence, Matto claimed that the USG had no better friend in Iraq than the Yezidi. He said Yezidis referred to the war as a "holy war" that would prove to be the "last war in the Middle East." He claimed an emotional and spiritual connection between Yezidis and Americans, and said Yezidi women wept each time a U.S. soldier was killed. Matto said high-level YMPR members in Sinjar routinely met with Coalition Forces (CF) and U.S. officials to pass on intelligence about the area. Matto said thanks to U.S. military and human rights efforts, Yezidis, as well as Chaldo/Assyrians, Shabek, and Turkmen, had seats in the national assembly. He said he hoped Yezidis would eventually have the same level of cooperation with the USG as "Israelis." In exchange for this cooperation, however, Matto claimed Yezidis would like some assurances and protections from the USG.

4. (C) Matto asked for USG assistance to pressure the GOI to

"re-create" the "Ministry of Yezidi Affairs," since the he claimed it was scrapped by the GOI after transition from the CPA. [NOTE: Matto said YMPR nominated him for the minister position]. "Fanatical Moslems" did away with the ministry, said Matto, in an effort to "wipe minorities from existence." He said the ministry was important to the community because it ensured Yezidis had a voice in the government. He claimed the new GOI, with its sectarian majority, was "worse today than the government of Saddam Hussein." "Only the U.S. can control fanatics," said Matto, and therefore the USG would have to do more to protect minorities.

KURD ENCROACHMENT PROBLEMS AND SHIFTING POWER CENTERS

15. (C) Matto said Yezidis naturally feared the Kurds. He claimed that from 1214 to 1935 the Kurds conducted numerous pogroms against Yezidis, essentially "removing [them] from [their] natural lands in northern Iraq." He said a once strong population in the millions was now down around 850,000 nationwide. He said the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), specifically the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was controlling many Yezidi areas in Ninewa (reftel a). And accused the KDP, specifically, of waging a "psychological war" against Yezidis. Matto accused Vice Governor Khassro Goran of skirting the law by not allowing YMPR President Amin Farhan Al-Marwani (reftel b) and his private security details weapons permits. He accused local KDP members in Sinjar, Rabiya and Tal Afar of giving Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and CF "false stories" of Yezidi involvement in terrorism. He said these "lies" contributed to the arrest of four young Yezidis. He claimed that lack of potable water in Sinjar, for example, was a direct result of KDP meddling in water supply shipments to the area. Matto claimed the Kurds were fearful of the growing Yezidi population in Sinjar, and did not want to compete for resources and jobs.

16. (C) Regarding the influence of Yezidi Prince Amir Tahseen

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Baqr, the worldwide religious and spiritual leader of the Yezidi who resided in Shekhan, Matto said he believed Alisado was a "hostage of the Kurds." He claimed Baqr lived in a house with constant protection by Peshmerga, and was coerced to issue public statements on the Kurd's and not the Yezidis community's behalf. He referred to Baqr's condition as "tragic." Matto claimed that given the growing strength of the party, more Yezidis were gravitating towards YMPR and away from the Kurds.

17. (C) Matto threatened "civil war" against the Kurds if conditions did not improve in Sinjar. He claimed Yezidis were not averse to taking up arms to against the Kurds if the situation demanded. Matto insisted that the Kurds removed their control over the Iraqi Police and provincial government in the area. As CF were drawn down in Iraq, Matto requested that Yezidis be used as the primary members of ISF in Sinjar instead of "Shia and Kurds." Matto claimed that disaster would occur if Yezidis were playing an active role in the ISF.

COMMENT

18. (C) Although only our first meeting with Matto, we have met with members of YMPR in the past. While many YMPR members are fervently anti-Kurd, and believe Yezidis have been victims of widespread Kurdish conspiracies, their requests that Yezidis should play a stronger role with providing their own security resonate here with other minority groups. Many minorities, as well as Kurds and Arabs, have told us they prefer a more representative police and military, and that such a force would improve security in the province. However, based on our discussions with provincial government and local security officials, the move to create a more representative police and military appears to have been stalled in Baghdad. Matto's

threat to take up arms highlights the underlying problem many minorities face in Ninewa, and perhaps Iraq in general: that without "numbers" on their side minorities fear being swallowed up by their larger neighbors and forgotten. YMPR has an advantage over other minority groups in that it has a seat in the national assembly. PRT hopes that by continued engagement with YMPR reps the legitimate concerns of this, and other minority groups, can be addressed.

MUNTER